

Lancashire Christian Leader Honoured with Paramount Chieftaincy in Sierra Leone.

Recognition honours nearly two decades of
Christian ministry and humanitarian work.

CHORLEY, LANCASHIRE, U.K. / PORT LOKO,
SIERRA LEONE — [31/01/2026]



Rev Bernard Cocker, Founder & CEO of Lancashire based Christian charity International Aid Trust, has been presented with a Chieftaincy Certificate recognising him as a Paramount Chief by the traditional authorities of Lokomasama Chiefdom in Port Loko District, Sierra Leone, West Africa.

The recognition acknowledges 18 years of Christian ministry and humanitarian service among communities in the region, it was granted on 31 January 2026 by the chiefdom’s traditional leadership in appreciation of the long-term impact of the charity’s work among local communities.

The official certificate states that the honour was given: “In view of the outstanding Christian and humanitarian work of International Aid Trust in Sierra Leone and in our communities.”

Only a small number of international figures have previously received honorary recognitions within Sierra Leone — including two from Britain, former UK Prime Minister Tony Blair and former British High Commissioner Peter Penfold — Rev. Cocker’s recognition was granted by the traditional authorities of Lokomasama Chiefdom in acknowledgement of long-term service and the work carried out within the community.

Chieftaincy remains an important part of Sierra Leone’s cultural and governance structure. Paramount Chiefs are recognised traditional leaders who represent and protect the welfare of their people and play a role in the country’s local government system.

Bernard says the recognition reflects the work of many people who have supported the ministry over the years.

“This honour is not really about me,” he says, “It belongs to all the staff, volunteers, supporters and churches who have faithfully stood with us over the years. Without them, none of this work would have been possible. It is a recognition of what God has done through many people working together, we have wonderful teams.”

Rev. Cocker founded International Aid Trust in 1991, in Chorley, the charity’s headquarters are now on Pall Mall, near Chorley town centre.

International Aid Trust has worked in humanitarian and Christian ministry for more than 35 years. The charity began its work supporting communities in Ukraine, then Eastern Europe and has since expanded into Africa, Asia and other regions affected by poverty and conflict.

In Sierra Leone, the trust runs a secondary school, a primary school, two preschools educating 740 children in total, also skills training for adults, an orphanage and a clinic, while also supporting communities through practical aid, Christian outreach, healthcare initiatives and long-term development projects.

Bernard also paid tribute to the charity's Sierra Leone Director Pastor Michael Fofanah, Headmistress Alice Fofanah and other leaders in Sierra Leone who serve as part of the International Aid Trust ministry team.

“The pastors and ministry leaders in Sierra Leone are at the heart of this work. They serve faithfully every day among their own communities, and we believe God has called and anointed them for this ministry. Much of what has been achieved has been through their dedication and leadership.”

He added that the ministry's mission will continue, especially in Ukraine where it all began.

“Our calling remains the same — to serve people in need and to share the love of Christ wherever God opens the door.”

Find out more about International Aid Trust and how you can get involved:

www.internationalaidtrust.org.uk

Media enquiries please email julie@internationalaidtrust.org.uk



Left: Bernard displays the certificate presented by the traditional authorities of Lokomasama Chieftdom honouring his Christian and humanitarian work in Sierra Leone. Right: Bernard with local officials and two International Aid Trust Trustees, Stephen Hardman left & Paul Cook far right, who both received certificates of appreciation.